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Self-directed teacher learning in collaborative contexts.

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Summary: Two related case studies of secondary mathematics teachers examine the roles and conditions helpful in initiating, directing, and/or supporting teachers' own professional development. Using multiple data sources from school-based and professional settings, we applied analytic induction to identify patterns of similarities and differences in teachers' experiences and developmental trajectories. Findings revealed how the teachers served as brokers in their own development process and how attitude, attention, and awareness played important roles in teacher learning. As the teachers initiated learning processes, they demonstrated awareness of broader educational contexts that support learning by identifying external policies and priorities that aligned with teachers' attitudes. They then used these external priorities as boundary objects to broker for teachers' learning, including other teachers' learning. They attended to learning needs in directing a plan for learning activities, rather than using externally mandated goals for changing practice (e.g., an external focus on improving students' tests scores). These cases suggest that in structuring professional learning, opportunities to self-identify learning needs should be part of the process, and external supports can become more powerful when teachers play a brokering role in relating these supports to their immediate contexts. Further implications for professional development processes are explored.

Classification: C39 C29

Keywords: self-directed learning; collaborative learning; professional development; teacher learning; attitude; attention; awareness

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